

COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED CONSERVATION OF  
*LEPTOTYPHLOPS* AND *RAMPHOTYPHLOPS* Z.N.(S.) 2155.  
(see vol. 33: 204-207)

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All of the six requests to the Commission strongly merit approval. *Leptotyphlops* is far too well entrenched in the literature now to be replaced for any reason; its inclusion on the Official List, and the concomitant suppression of *Typhlina*, with inclusion on the Official Index, are fully justified measures to conserve that name. In this context it should be pointed out that *Leptotyphlops* is the type-genus of the universally-adopted (as of now) family-name LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE, as well-entrenched as the nominal genus *Leptotyphlops*. The nomenclatural details pertaining to the family name were succinctly reviewed in 1969 (*J. Herpet.*, vol. 3: 21-22).

Although *Ramphotyphlops* has been used in this century only since 1966, its conservation is justified by the erroneous substitution for it of *Typhlina* and the subsequent confusion of nomenclature for the genus.

The requested inclusion of *nigricans* (via *Typhlops nigricans*) and *multilineatus* (via *Typhlops multilineatus*) on the Official List of Specific Names is justified on the basis of serving as the type-species of *Leptotyphlops* and *Ramphotyphlops* respectively.

The point that suppression of *Typhlina* does not leave its type-species, *Anguis septemstriatus* Schneider, devoid of a distinctive generic name, should it be regarded as generically separate from *Leptotyphlops*, is important especially in view of the sketchy knowledge of these rare snakes, and the difficulty of their study. It is highly likely that additional groups currently placed in the large genus *Leptotyphlops* will be recognized as separate genera in the future. However, the available name that would substitute for the suppressed *Typhlina* is properly spelled *Siagonodon* Peters, 1881, not *Saigonodon* as rendered in the proposal here discussed.

Of prime importance in allocation of the name *Typhlina* is, of course, its type-species. In this proposal it is pointed out that *Acontias lineatus*, which Fitzinger (1843) designated as type-species for *Typhlina*, and which designation McDowell (1974) accepted, was a *nomen nudum* in 1830, when Wagler proposed the name. I have confirmed by examination of the three pre-1830 usages of *Acontias lineatus* cited in the proposal that all leave the name as a *nomen nudum*, and I have found no other pre-1830 usages. The conclusion that *Acontias lineatus* was not available for any nomenclatural use in 1830 is thus confirmed. The name became occupied first in 1839 in a work by Schlegel (*Abbildungen Amphib.*, 1839: 39, pl. 32, figs. 32-34), and it is still recognized as a valid species, occurring on the Malay Peninsula and in the northern East Indies. McDowell accepted it as type of *Typhlina* because the name had been occupied by the time Fitzinger (1843) designated it as type of *Typhlina*. As pointed out in this proposal, Art. 68c of the 1964 Code requires

that any species designated as type of a genus by monotypy must have an available name at the time the generic name was proposed.

As noted by McDowell (1974: 20), Barbour (1912, *Mem. Mus. Comp. Zool.*, vol. 44(1): 97) gives a brief history of the name *Acontias lineatus*; however, no pertinent details are revealed there that have not already been considered.

The Commission should be aware of the number of names involved in the genus recognized as *Ramphotyphlops* by Robb (1966) and as *Typhlina* by McDowell (1974). These are the only synoptic works thus far published that deal with this genus. Robb placed 24 species she regarded as valid in *Ramphotyphlops*. McDowell, in a thorough taxonomic review, referred 47 nominal species to *Typhlina* (used in the same sense as Robb's *Ramphotyphlops*), most of them previously regarded as valid, but of which he recognized but 22. Only one of these names has been used very widely - *Typhlina bramina* (Daudin), an essentially pantropical species, widely introduced by inadvertence, and notable also because of its parthenogenicity.

Although many nominal species are thus involved in the *Ramphotyphlops* - *Typhlina* confusion, neither name has been in use in more than the last 12 years in this century, and neither has developed a particularly large or significant literature. Stability of nomenclature in that context is therefore not a strongly compelling factor, and does not justify use of heroic measures to conserve one name in preference to the other. Therefore no reason exists not to adopt the nomenclatural procedure that does preserve the established stability of nomenclature relative to the names *Leptotyphlops* and LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE, to wit by approval of the requests presented in this proposal. The only change I suggest is that the Commission consider simultaneous conservation of the family name LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE Stejneger, 1891 (*Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus.*, vol. 14: 501), type-genus *Leptotyphlops* Fitzinger, 1843, by inclusion of it in the Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology, and admitting its effective date of proposal, for purposes of the Law of Priority, as 1890 (in accordance with Art. 40b of the 1964 Code), when the name GLAUCONIIDAE was proposed by Boulenger (*Fauna Brit. India, Rept.*: 242), based upon *Glauconia* Gray, 1845, a junior synonym of *Leptotyphlops* Fitzinger, 1843.

#### Reply by A.F. Stimson and G.L. Underwood.

It was not our intention to involve ourselves in family-group names. Having ensured the survival of *Leptotyphlops*, we assumed that protection of LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE would follow.

If, as Professor Smith suggests, LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE can take the date 1891 (1890), then only two other family-group names need be considered. One is STENOSTOMIDAE [sic] Cope, 1886, which is invalid because the name of its type-genus, *Stenostoma* Wagler, 1824, is a junior homonym of *Stenostoma* Latreille, 1810. The other is GLAUCONIIDAE Boulenger, 1890, based on *Glauconia* Gray, 1845, a junior objective synonym of *Leptotyphlops*. Both *Glauconia* and GLAUCONIIDAE had been rejected before 1961, however, and there is no divergence of opinion or usage where LEPTOTYPHLOPIDAE is concerned.